

Cross-Cultural Awareness

Indian Definition

- A person with Indian Blood that is recognized by the person's tribe or community
- Tribal membership is determined by:
 - Tribal constitutions
 - Tribal law
 - Tribal rolls
 - Varying degrees of blood quantum (1/2, 1/4, 3/4)
 - The Cherokee and Muskogee Creek use sets of historic Daws Land Allotment rolls to determine who is a member

Indian Identity

- Federal Definition:
 - Member of a federally recognized tribe
 - Blood quantum for some federal programs

What is an Indian Tribe?

- 351 federally recognized tribes in lower 48
- 211 federally recognized Alaskan entities
- "Tribe" is a modern term that has come to mean:
 - A body of people bound together by blood ties
 - Socially, politically, and religiously organized
 - Live together in the same area
 - Speak a common language

What is an Indian Reservation?

- Land reserved by a tribe that relinquished other land areas by treaty
- Land reserved for a tribe through:
 - Executive Order
 - Congressional Act
 - Administrative Act
- Reservation land is also referred to as Indian Country
- Approximately 275 Indian Reservations
 - 56.2 million acres of land held in trust for tribes
 - Largest: Navajo reservation, which is about 16 million acres in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah
 - Smallest: A Rancheria in California of less than 10 acres

Sovereign Nations

- Today all federally recognized tribal governments are recognized by federal and state governments as possessing inherent sovereignty
- In 1934 the Indian Reorganization Act was passed, which allowed tribal governments to be approved by the federal government

If Tribes are Sovereign Nations, What is Their Political Makeup?

- Tribal councils, legislative, or business committees govern tribes
- Tribal council members are elected at large
- Tribal government structures, as we know them today, were organized under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and the Oklahoma Indian Welfare Act of 1936. The BIA approved some tribal governments
- Tribal government structures have existed for thousands of years, and these structures reflected and reinforced
 - Cooperation
 - Responsibility of community
 - Harmony
 - Spirituality
- Most traditional tribal governments changed in the 1800s due to the impact of settlers moving further and further West
- Indians of the Southeast adapted to the non-Indian political and social institutions
- Indians of the Southwest, and the Pueblos, elected public governments to deal with the outsiders
- Tribal governments face the same challenges as other governments
- Tribal governments also possess an additional responsibility and complicated challenge that other governments do not
 - They must provide governmental structures and services that reflect and enhance the values and needs of the membership
 - They must also be responsive to and protective of demands from the outside

Today Indian Nations Possess the Right to:

- Govern their own affairs, including the authority to structure their government
- Regulate membership
- Maintain justice on their land
- Provide for public safety and welfare
- Develop tribal economies and regulate businesses
- Tax

What is Culture?

- Culture is the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes a shared history and language, values, attitudes, religion, laws and legal system, and social, economic, and political systems
- It is the sum total of people's living experience
- Culture determines how one communicates with others

How Do You Understand a New Culture?

- You must be:
 - Open-minded
 - Receptive to new ways of thinking (thinking outside the box)
 - Able to listen and not interrupt
 - Able to be flexible
 - Able to minimize judgmental behavior and attitudes
- People who are driven by agendas and schedules have a difficult time working in Indian Country

Worldviews and Religions of Many Tribes are a Major Part of their Culture

- Religion can structure how and when one interacts with others
- Some rituals must be performed at particular
 - Places
 - Times
 - Manner
- Fundamental to many Native religions is the belief in the sacred character of physical places such as
 - Mountain peaks
 - Springs
 - Burial places
- Loss of these places can damage the validity and balance of Native American religions
- Health, religion, and the environment are all interconnected
- At one time, tribal governments and religious leaders made all decisions together

Cross-Cultural Communication

- How do you conduct yourself at any meeting with tribal members will make or break your relationship with the tribe
- Communication must be conducted in a culturally sensitive manner
- Talk early and talk often
- Never go into a meeting with tribes with the “Decide, Announce, and Defend” approach
- Avoid secret activities; tribes will always find out
- Be flexible about schedules, deadlines, and agendas
- Conflicts can arise over the following:
 - Time it takes to prepare a written response
 - Different value systems
 - Meeting agendas not being followed
 - No immediate tribal response at a meeting
 - Deadlines not being met
- Do not judge another’s culture against your cultural standards
- Do not assume that elements of your culture are appropriate and acceptable to other cultures
- Leave your stereotype, prejudice, bias, and ethnocentric ideas at the door
- Open minds prevent ethnocentric reactions and help prevent cultural arrogance
- You need to:
 - Pay attention
 - Be alert
 - Listen carefully
 - Wait for an answer
- Tips for working with tribal governments and tribal representatives:
 - Learn about the tribe’s government structure
 - Learn about tribal customs
 - Remember that decisions may take longer than you anticipate
 - Don’t promise what you can’t deliver
 - Explain terms and procedures
 - void tribal politics
 - Silence is often a sign of respect, so don’t take it personally if tribal members do not talk at a meeting

Above all, learn something about the culture of the tribe or tribes you will be meeting.

Working in Indian Country can be one of the most professionally exciting and personally rewarding experiences you will have.

Approach this challenge without fear, with respect, and speak the truth, and you will be effective.